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ABSTRACT

This report contains findings from a descriptive study of the characteristics, services, and outcomes of consumers who achieved a supported employment (SE) outcome after exiting Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services. Data were obtained through case file abstraction, consumer interviews, and an extended service provider interview of 259 SE consumers. Findings from the study include: (1) mental retardation was the primary disability for one-half of the all SE consumers; (2) educational institutions were the largest single source of referral; (3) SE consumers were almost three times more likely than other consumers to have received special education services and to be more significantly disabled; (4) individuals who exited VR into SE received an average of 8.3 services, approximately two fewer than averaged by other consumers with significant disabilities; (5) 49% of all the jobs that SE consumers obtained were in the service industry; (6) at least 70% of consumers with significant disabilities exiting VR services were very or mostly satisfied with their VR experience; (7) consumers identified job coaching, counseling, off-site monitoring, and job skill training as services most frequently received after exiting VR services; and (8) one year after exiting VR services, 84% of SE consumers were still working. (CR)

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VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION EXPERIENCES AMONG INDIVIDUALS WHO ACHIEVED A SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME

A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE PROGRAM

Final Report

April 2000

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Submitted to
Rehabilitation Services Administration
U.S. Department of Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report contains findings from a descriptive study of the characteristics, services, and outcomes of consumers who achieved a supported employment (SE) outcome after exiting Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services. The Research Triangle Institute (RTI) conducted the study, as part of the larger Longitudinal Study of the VR Services Program, under contract to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Rehabilitation Services Administration. RTI obtained the data for the study through case file abstraction, consumer interviews, and an extended service provider interview for a nationally representative sample of 259 SE consumers.

Chapter 1 of this report summarizes the study's purpose and methods, Chapter 2 describes the demographic and disability characteristics of SE consumers, Chapter 3 discusses the services they received and the outcomes they achieved, and Chapter 4 contains findings on extended services and employment and earnings retention. Where appropriate, we compare the findings for SE consumers to those for other consumers of VR services with significant disabilities who obtained other types of employment. In the remainder of this summary, we use the study's research questions to organize key findings.

What are the characteristics of consumers in SE?

- Mental retardation was the primary disability for one-half of all SE consumers, and individuals with mental illness accounted for an additional 18 percent.
- Fifty-four percent of SE consumers had disabilities characterized as most significant, and another 42 percent had a significant disability.
- A majority of SE consumers were male (55 percent) and white (79 percent).
- The average age of SE consumers was 33.5 years, with nearly three-quarters under the age of 40.
- Eighty-seven percent of SE consumers had a high school diploma or GED as their highest educational credential, and over two-thirds (69 percent) had received special education services in high school.
- On average, SE consumers performed below the fifth-grade level in both reading and mathematics.
- Educational institutions were the largest single source of referral (23 percent), followed by self-referrals (15 percent).

- Seventy-two percent of SE consumers received some form of financial assistance at entry to VR, with SSI and SSDI the most frequent sources of assistance.
- Although 96 percent of SE consumers entered VR with some prior work experience, on average that experience was quite limited; over one-half (56 percent) had held only one job.
- Seventy percent of SE consumers' most recent jobs were in either the service industry (55 percent) or clerical/sales occupations (15 percent).
- On average, SE consumers earned $4.88 per hour (median of $4.98) and worked 24.5 hours per week (median of 23) in their most recent employment prior to applying for VR services; only 16 percent received employment-related health insurance.

How do the characteristics of SE consumers differ from the characteristics of other consumers of VR services?

- At entry into VR services, SE consumers were, on average, nine years younger than other significantly disabled consumers who exited VR services into employment.
- SE consumers were almost three times more likely than other successful, significantly disabled consumers to have received special education services. SE consumers performed four grade levels below other successful consumers in reading and three and one-half grade levels lower in math.
- Overall, SE consumers were more than twice as likely as other significantly disabled consumers who exited VR services into employment to be referred to VR services by an educational institution, and 27 percent more likely to have received financial assistance at entry into VR.
- In their most recent employment experience, SE consumers earned $2.38 less per hour, worked about 10 fewer hours per week, and received employment-related benefits about half as often as did other successful VR consumers with significant disabilities.
- Persons with mental retardation who exited VR services into SE were more similar to other mentally retarded consumers of VR services (who exited into other forms of employment) than they were to other successful SE consumers with respect to age, receipt of special education, academic achievement levels, referral sources, and prior earnings.
- SE consumers overall tended to be more significantly disabled, to have relied on financial assistance, and to have had a more limited work history than other significantly disabled consumers who obtained employment.

To what extent do the number and type of services received by SE consumers differ from those of other rehabilitants with earnings?

- Individuals who exited VR into SE received an average of 8.3 services (median of six), approximately two fewer than the 10.4 services (median of eight) averaged by other significantly disabled consumers, although this difference was not statistically significant.
- SE consumers were less likely than other significantly disabled consumers who exited VR services into employment to receive all types of services from VR, with the exception of education and training, which includes supported employment.
- SE consumers with a primary disability of mental retardation received an average of 7.2 services (median of six), compared to other SE consumers, who averaged 9.6 (median of eight).
- SE consumers were much less likely than other significantly disabled consumers who exited VR services into employment to receive assessments of sensory functioning, postsecondary education, physical restoration services, and transportation.
- VR agencies almost always purchased SE services for their consumers rather than providing such services through comparable benefits or directly from VR agency staff.
- Consumers who ultimately exited VR services into SE had an average of 1.7 placements, and spent an average of nine months in SE prior to exit from VR.
- The average cost of SE services for a single consumer was $4,921.

To what extent do the outcomes achieved by SE consumers differ from those of other rehabilitants with earnings?

- Nearly half (49 percent) of all the jobs that SE consumers obtained were in the service industry, more than double the percentage among other former consumers with significant disabilities who worked in service occupations (21 percent).
- Individuals who obtained an SE position worked an average of 23 hours per week and earned an average of $4.53 per hour, compared to other successful consumers with significant disabilities, who worked an average of 34 hours per week and earned an average hourly wage of $7.20, or $2.67 more than SE consumers.
- On average, individuals with mental retardation in SE earned virtually the same wage ($4.21) as did individuals with mental retardation who exited VR services into other forms of employment ($4.19).[1]

[1]Twenty-five percent of the individuals with mental retardation who exited VR services into other forms of employment worked in sheltered jobs.

- Persons with disabilities other than mental retardation who obtained SE earned $2.61 less per hour ($4.87) than did those with significant disabilities who obtained other forms of employment ($7.48).
- Persons obtaining SE were significantly less likely to receive either medical insurance or vacation/sick leave through their job than were other employed consumers with significant disabilities.

How do consumers exiting VR services in SE perceive the quality and utility of the services they receive from the VR agency and how do these perceptions differ from those of other VR consumers?

- At least 70 percent of consumers with significant disabilities exiting VR services were "very or mostly satisfied" with their VR experience, regardless of what aspect of that experience we measured (e.g., VR counselor performance, quality of services, amount of choice in decision making).
- SE consumer perceptions on the quality and utility of services they received varied little from those of other consumers with significant disabilities.
- Overall, 69 percent of SE consumers reported that their VR experience met or exceeded their expectations, 25 percent believed VR could have done more, and six percent had no opinion.

What types of extended services do SE consumers receive and to what extent are they satisfied with the extended services they receive?

- Consumers interviewed soon after exiting VR services identified job coaching (70 percent), counseling (67 percent), off-site monitoring (62 percent), and job skill training (47 percent) as the services they most frequently received.
- Between 65 and 79 percent of SE consumers who held the same job one year after exiting VR services continued to receive some type of support services. Over 90 percent of these consumers reported receipt of job coaching services.[2]
- We found no significant differences between consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers in the types of extended services they received.
- Consumer satisfaction with extended services was very high; more than three-fourths (77 percent) of all former SE consumers, including 82 percent of those with a primary disability of mental retardation, reported being "very pleased" with the services they were receiving.

[2]We are unable to provide more precise information in this area, in part because consumers were often unable to differentiate the sources of the services they received

What are the post-VR experiences of former consumers in SE with respect to retention of employment and earnings, and how do they compare with other VR services consumers?

- One year after exiting VR services, 84 percent of SE consumers were still working; 74 percent in the same job obtained through VR services, and an additional 10 percent in another job. Eighty-three percent of other employed former consumers with significant disabilities were employed one year after VR services ended. The majority of those working in the same job reported ongoing receipt of support services.
- The average hourly wage earned by former SE consumers one year after exiting VR services was $4.68 (median of $5.20), $3.34 less than the average wage earned by other significantly disabled consumers.
- Over half (53 percent) of former SE consumers received a raise in pay. The average increase for all SE consumers who received a raise was $1.11, with little variation by disability. Slightly more than half (55 percent) of other significantly disabled consumers also obtained a salary increase; however, their average increase of $2.20 was double the amount received by SE consumers.
- Average hours worked per week by former consumers exiting VR services into SE was 22.2 (median of 23), an average that varied little by disability. Consumers exiting into employment other than SE worked 13 hours more per week.
- Former SE consumers were significantly less likely to receive health insurance and other job-related benefits than were other employed former consumers with significant disabilities.
- While the overall percentage of SE consumers who received financial assistance changed little from entry into VR to one year after exiting VR services, 19 percent ceased receiving benefits over this time.[3]
- Overall, SE consumers with retardation reported general satisfaction with various aspects of their employment one year of the exiting VR services. Other SE consumers were less satisfied; at least 45 percent reported being "not satisfied" with their earnings, benefits, or opportunity for advancement.

[3]Fifty-eight percent of the consumers who did not receive financial assistance at entry received such assistance one year later.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

One of the most popular approaches in the rehabilitation of persons with significant disabilities in the last decade, supported employment (SE) was originally developed to facilitate the transition of persons with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities into work through the use of on-site job coaches and other supports. Supported employment, as defined by statute, means competitive work in an integrated work setting with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, or has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of significant disabilities.[1] Using federal funds from Titles I (basic Vocational Rehabilitation [VR] Services program) and VI-B (Supported Employment services for individuals with significant disabilities) of the Rehabilitation Act, state VR agencies in recent years have expanded both the number of SE programs and the types of consumers served in these programs.

By regulation, the "ongoing support services" needed by individuals with significant disabilities to maintain supported employment are to be provided by the VR agency from the time of job placement until transition to extended services, and must include twice monthly monitoring at the work site.[2] VR agencies may provide ongoing support services for up to 18 months, unless the counselor and consumer decide a longer period is needed to achieve job stability. The agency must also identify (and record in the case file) a source of support for extended services after the time-limited services that VR provides have ended. Extended services may be provided by a state agency, a private nonprofit organization, or other appropriate resource.

Since 1992, the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) has been conducting a Longitudinal Study of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Program, whose overall purpose is to examine the performance of the state-federal program in assisting consumers to achieve long-term economic and nonconomic outcomes. To accomplish this purpose, RTI is collecting information through abstraction of VR agency case files, questionnaires for VR agency staff, and interviews with a nationally representative sample of current and former consumers of VR

[1]The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, Sec. 7(18)(A).

[2]The regulations allow for off-site monitoring where determined appropriate by the consumer and counselor. If appropriate, off-site monitoring must include two meetings with the consumer and one contact with the employer each month.

services. In 1996, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) augmented the VR Longitudinal Study with a supported employment substudy whose central purpose was to investigate the characteristics, services, and outcomes of individuals whose employment outcome was supported employment (SE). This report describes the results of the SE study.

We designed the SE study to obtain descriptive data on individuals served by the VR program who achieved an SE outcome. Specifically, the study addressed five broad questions of interest to RSA:[3]

- What are the characteristics of consumers in SE, and how do they differ from the characteristics of other consumers of VR services?
- To what extent do the services received and outcomes achieved by SE consumers differ from those of other rehabilitants with earnings?
- How do consumers exiting VR services in SE perceive the quality and utility of the services they receive from the VR agency, and how do these perceptions differ from those of other consumers?
- What types of extended services do SE consumers receive, and to what extent are they satisfied with the extended services they receive?
- What are the post-VR experiences of former consumers in SE with respect to retention of employment and earnings and how do they compare with other consumers of VR services?

This study made no attempt to establish causal relationships among consumer characteristics, services obtained, and outcomes achieved. Rather, we aimed to provide a nationally representative description of the population of consumers who achieved SE outcomes in relation to other consumers of VR services with significant disabilities who obtained an employment outcome.

Design of the Supported Employment Study

We relied on existing data collection instruments used in the ongoing VR longitudinal study to obtain the majority of information needed to respond to the SE study's research questions in an effort to maximize efficiency and to minimize any additional burden on study participants. We also tried, to the maximum extent possible, to identify potential participants for the SE study from the pool of consumers already participating in the main study.

[3]Another issue we set out to explore in this study was why some people with a goal of SE do not achieve an SE outcome. We were not able to address this issue because SE was rarely identified as a goal on consumers' individual rehabilitation plans.

In order to collect the information required to address the main study's research questions, we used a multistage design that involved selection of a random sample of 37 local VR offices (in 32 VR state agencies located in a total of 30 states) and a sample of 8,500 applicants and current and former consumers of VR services. In order to assess the longer term outcomes of VR participation, the study implemented a cohort design that entailed random selection of individuals at one of three stages of involvement with VR. We selected 25 percent of the total sample when they were in the application process; 50 percent of the sample while they were receiving VR services, and 25 percent at or after exit from VR services.

We followed each individual for three years; some were still receiving VR services at the end of this time, although most had left VR and were working, receiving other services, or engaging in a variety of other activities. Following baseline data collection, we conducted an annual interview with each study participant, and the interview topics varied contingent on the individual's VR services and employment experiences. This design accommodated the average length of stay in VR (nearly two years) while at the same time permitting us to track the post-VR earnings, employment, and community integration of individuals following exit from VR as either "successful" or "unsuccessful" closures.

The SE study design called for completion of all existing longitudinal study instrumentation, as appropriate, for all participants in the SE study. We obtained more comprehensive information on consumers' SE experience, using three additional data collection instruments:

- ***SE case file abstraction form***: completed in conjunction with the abstraction of consumer records at or after the point of exit from the VR program, the SE case file abstraction focused on documentation useful in describing the SE position obtained and plans for extended services.
- ***SE consumer interviews***: administered in conjunction with the annual satisfaction interview and the one-year follow up interview, as appropriate, these interviews focused on respondent perspectives on their SE experience both during and after participation in VR.
- ***Extended services provider interview***: completed at or near the point of consumers' exit from the VR program, this telephone interview with the extended services provider (as identified in the consumers' VR files) solicited basic information on the services received by former VR consumers who achieved an SE outcome.

Figure 1 summarizes data collection instruments and administration schedules.[4]

Figure 1: Data Collection Instruments, with Method and Frequency of Administration

INSTRUMENT	METHOD	FREQUENCY
Consumer interviews		
Work history	Personal/telephone interview	Baseline
Functional status	Personal/telephone interview	Baseline and case closure
Satisfaction	Personal/telephone interview	Baseline and annually to closure
Annual follow up	Telephone interview	Annually from closure of case file
Consumer records		
Consumer characteristics	Records abstraction	Baseline with quarterly updates
Services	Records abstraction	Baseline and quarterly
Extended Services Providers		
Extended services	Telephone interview	At exit from VR services

We set out to identify a total of approximately 550 consumers of VR services, or around 15 per site, to participate in the SE study. We wanted to select from each site an average of five VR consumers who were actively receiving SE services and 10 former consumers who had recently exited VR services in a supported employment position. The design called for a majority of participants to be selected at or after exit from VR services in order to ensure a sufficiently large sample about whom we could document their post-VR experiences (e.g., retention of employment and earnings).

We identified active consumers from among those individuals participating in the main study by determining, through ongoing records abstraction, which consumers received SE services. Once a field data collector completed an SE service form for a consumer in the main study, we asked that consumer to participate in the SE study. We identified former SE consumers by asking our data collectors to complete a roster of all consumers who exited VR services into an SE job each month until we identified our target number of consumers, or until the six-month sampling period ended. Individuals on these rosters might or might not already have been participants in the main study.

We experienced difficulty identifying the target of 550 consumers during the six-month sampling period, in part because some of the participating sites provided limited or no SE services in those locations. In fact, three of the 37 local offices in the main study reported no SE consumers. Many of the other sites identified far fewer SE consumers than the average of 15 we

[4]The main study also collected data from the VR agency through a variety of forms.

sought. Ultimately we selected a total of 423 SE consumers from 34 sites that reported provision of SE services.

We completed data collection for 259 of these consumers (61 percent), including 80 active consumers and 179 former consumers who exited VR services into SE, and weighted the data to represent SE consumers nationwide. Reasons we did not complete data collection for the remaining consumers included an inability to locate the consumer (36 percent), consumer refusal to participate (29 percent), lack of an agency release (21 percent), and a variety of others, such as death or consumer transfer to another office (14 percent).

Organization of the Report

The remainder of this report presents the findings of the SE study. In the following chapter we describe SE consumers in terms of disability type, demographics, history of labor force participation, and other characteristics. Chapter 3 describes the services SE consumers obtained, their employment outcomes, and their perspectives on their VR experience. Chapter 4 summarizes the post-VR experiences of SE consumers including receipt of extended services and retention of employment and earnings one-year after exiting VR services. Chapter 5 uses the study's research questions to organize a summary of study findings.

A few points of clarification are in order before we discuss study findings. First, supported employment is both a service and an employment outcome. Unless explicitly described as an "SE service" our use of the term "SE" refers to an employment outcome. Second, in the remainder of this report we frequently compare the findings for SE consumers with other consumers, as appropriate, in an effort to address the study's central purpose. Unless otherwise specified, the comparison group includes all consumers with significant or most significant disabilities who obtained an employment outcome other than SE.

CHAPTER 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT CONSUMERS

One of the questions this study was designed to address was: "What are the characteristics of persons who obtain a supported employment position as a result of VR services, and how do they differ from other consumers of VR services who obtain employment?" In this chapter we respond to this question by first describing the characteristics of consumers who exited VR services in a SE position during the period of data collection, Summer 1996 through Summer 1999. We then compare the characteristics of SE consumers with those of other consumers of VR services with significant disabilities who obtained employment other than SE. Our principal aim in this chapter is to provide a detailed picture of the average SE consumer at the point of application for VR services, and to identify areas in which the average SE consumer differed from other successful consumers. Specific topics we discuss include disability and demographic characteristics, educational status, work history, sources of financial support, and sources of referral. The chief data sources for this chapter are consumers' case files and a work history interview administered to all participants at entry into the study.

Disability and Demographic Characteristics[1]

Persons with a primary disability of mental retardation accounted for one-half (50 percent) of all persons who exited VR services in an SE position. As indicated in **Table 1**, (and **Figure 2**) mental illness was the primary disability recorded for another 18 percent of SE consumers, nonorthopedic physical disabilities for an additional nine percent, and orthopedic disabilities for eight percent. No other single disability accounted for more than five percent of the total. Over one-half of SE consumers (54 percent) had disabilities characterized as "most significant," and an additional 42 percent had a "significant" disability.[2] Also, 70 percent of SE consumers had congenital, as opposed to acquired, disabilities.

Individuals with orthopedic impairments accounted for more than one-fourth (27 percent) of other consumers, more than three times the percentage of individuals with such impairments exiting VR services in an SE position. Individuals with mental illness constituted roughly equal

[1]Unless otherwise noted, all comparisons /differences appearing in the text (not the tables) are statistically significant at a probability level of .05 or lower. All significant differences are indicated in each table by an asterisk.

[2]Case records for many of the consumers used the terms "most severe" and "severe;" we take these terms to be synonymous with "most significant" and "significant."

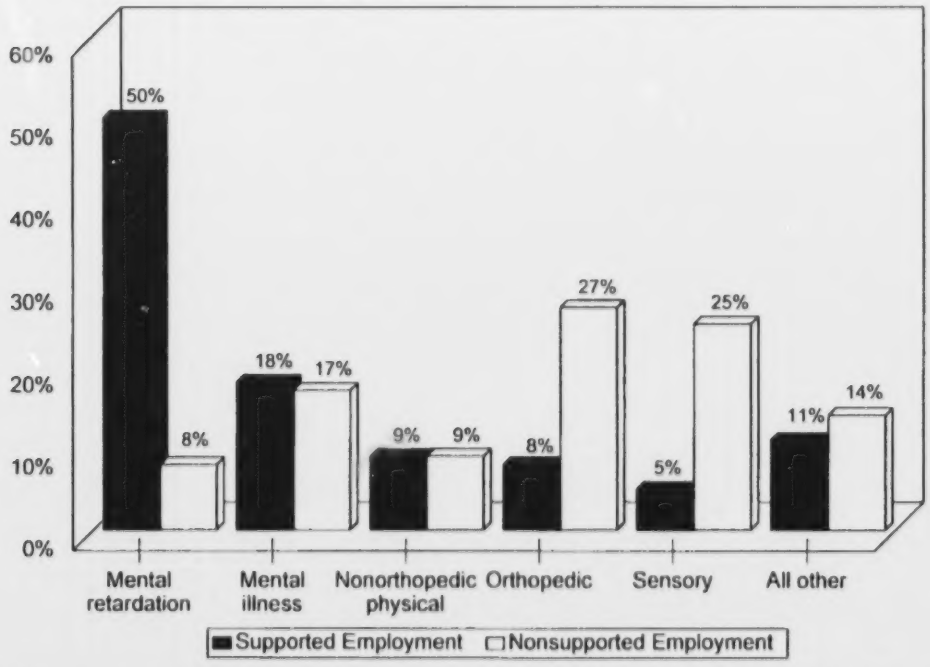
Table 1: Disability Characteristics of SE and Other Consumers

Characteristics	Percentage of SE Consumers	Percentage of Other Consumers
Type of disability		
Mental retardation*	50%	8%
Mental illness	18%	17%
Nonorthopedic physical	9%	9%
Orthopedic*	8%	27%
Learning disability	5%	7%
Hearing impairment*	4%	13%
Traumatic brain injury	3%	1%
All other conditions	2%	1%
Vision impairment	1%	12%
Substance abuse*	1%	5%
Significance of disability		
Most significant	54%	33%
Significant*	42%	67%
Not significant	4%	-
Onset of disability		
Congenital*	70%	29%
Acquired*	30%	71%

Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

*Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.

Figure 2: Primary Disabilities of Supported Employment and Other Consumers



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percentages of the total in both groups; 18 percent of those in SE positions and 17 percent of those in other employment. Only eight percent of the individuals in other employment were individuals with mental retardation. As indicated in the table, consumers with significant disabilities who exited VR services in a job that was not supported employment were more than twice as likely to have acquired disabilities. A smaller percentage of these consumers had disabilities recorded as most significant (33 percent to 54 percent for SE), although the difference was not statistically significant.

Table 2 summarizes study findings on the demographic characteristics of SE and other consumers. Owing to the high percentage of consumers with mental retardation in SE, this table, and most subsequent tables, examine the data separately for consumers with mental retardation and consumers with other disabilities. As shown, the majority of SE consumers were male (55 percent) and white (79 percent), with 21 percent African American.[3] The average age of SE consumers was 33. 5 years, with nearly three-fourths (74 percent) aged 39 or less. SE consumers with mental retardation were more likely to be female (54 percent compared to 36 percent) and were an average of over four years younger than other SE consumers, although these differences were not statistically significant. On average, consumers with significant disabilities exiting VR services in jobs other than SE were nine years older than were SE consumers; we found no statistically significant differences with respect to gender or race.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of SE and Other Consumers, by Disability Type

Demographic Characteristic	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Gender						
Male	46%	64%	55%	48%	52%	51%
Female	54%	36%	45%	52%	48%	49%
Race						
White	77%	80%	79%	78%	88%	87%
African American	22%	19%	21%	22%	11%	11%
Other	1%	1%	1%	-	2%	1%
Age						
Mean*	31.4	35.7	33.5	31.0	43.8	42.8
Median	33.0	35.5	34.0	27.0	42.0	41.0

*Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

[3]For comparison purposes, the U.S. Census estimates that 83 percent of the U.S. population is white.

Eighty-seven percent of SE consumers had a high school diploma or GED as their highest educational credential, and 69 percent received special education services in secondary school (**Table 3**). The average number of years of education completed was 11.7. Average achievement levels for SE consumers in reading and mathematics were 4.5 and 4.4, respectively. As indicated in **Table 3**, receipt of special education services and achievement levels varied widely by disability type; consumers with mental retardation were more than twice as likely to have received special education services and performed approximately 2.5 grade levels below other SE consumers in both subject areas.

Table 3: Educational Status of SE and Other Consumers, by Disability Type

	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Highest Degree Obtained						
High school or GED†	100%	81%	87%	97%	80%	81%
Postsecondary†	0%	19%	12%	3%	20%	19%
Average number of years of education completed†	11.0	12.3	11.7	11.0	12.2	12.1
Evidence of special education in case file*†	94%	44%	69%	91%	17%	24%
Average achievement levels						
Reading*†	3.0	5.8	4.5	3.9	9.3	8.5
Mathematics*†	3.0	5.5	4.4	3.8	8.5	7.8

*Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
†Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Average grade level achievement in both reading and math for consumers with significant disabilities who exited VR services into employment other than SE was nearly double that of SE consumers. Overall, SE consumers were almost three times more likely to have received special education (69 percent compared to 24 percent). However, over 90 percent of all consumers with mental retardation received special education regardless of employment outcome. In fact, on characteristics such as age, gender, receipt of special education, and achievement levels, consumers with mental retardation in SE were far more similar to other persons with mental retardation, than they were to other SE consumers.

The most significant differences on these disability and demographic characteristics occurred between individuals with disabilities other than mental retardation in SE and individuals without retardation in other employment. SE consumers with disabilities other than

mental retardation were an average of over eight years younger, and nearly twice as likely to have a congenital disability, than were consumers in other employment with disabilities other than mental retardation. Moreover, the achievement levels of SE consumers with disabilities other than mental retardation, although more than two grade levels higher than individuals with mental retardation in SE, were three or more grade levels below those for individuals with disabilities other than mental retardation not in SE.

Labor Force Participation

Our source of information on labor force participation among VR consumers is a work history interview we administered to all participants at entry into the study. The interview asks consumers to report the type of occupation, wages earned, hours worked, receipt of employment-related benefits, and overall job satisfaction, for each job held in the two years prior to applying for VR services, and for their longest uninterrupted period of employment, regardless of when they held the job. We have organized the findings on labor force participation into two broad areas. The first area, consumers' overall history of labor force participation, discusses the extent to which SE consumers had employment experience and describes the employment status of consumers at the time of application to VR. We then provide a summary description of consumers' most recent employment experience.

History of Labor Force Participation

Data from the work history interview indicate that 96 percent of the consumers who exited VR services in SE had some amount of employment experience before applying for VR services (**Table 4** and **Figure 3**). Nearly one-fourth (24 percent) were working at application.[4] Another quarter (24 percent), though not working at entry, had worked at some point in the two years prior to applying for VR services. Overall, slightly less than one-half (48 percent) had a current or recent history of employment prior to entry into VR, and an equal number had worked at some time in their life, but not during the two years prior to applying for VR services. A significantly higher percentage of consumers with significant disabilities exiting VR services in employment other than SE had worked in the two years prior to entry (38 percent compared to 24 percent for SE consumers). Twenty-four percent of both groups were working at the time of application.

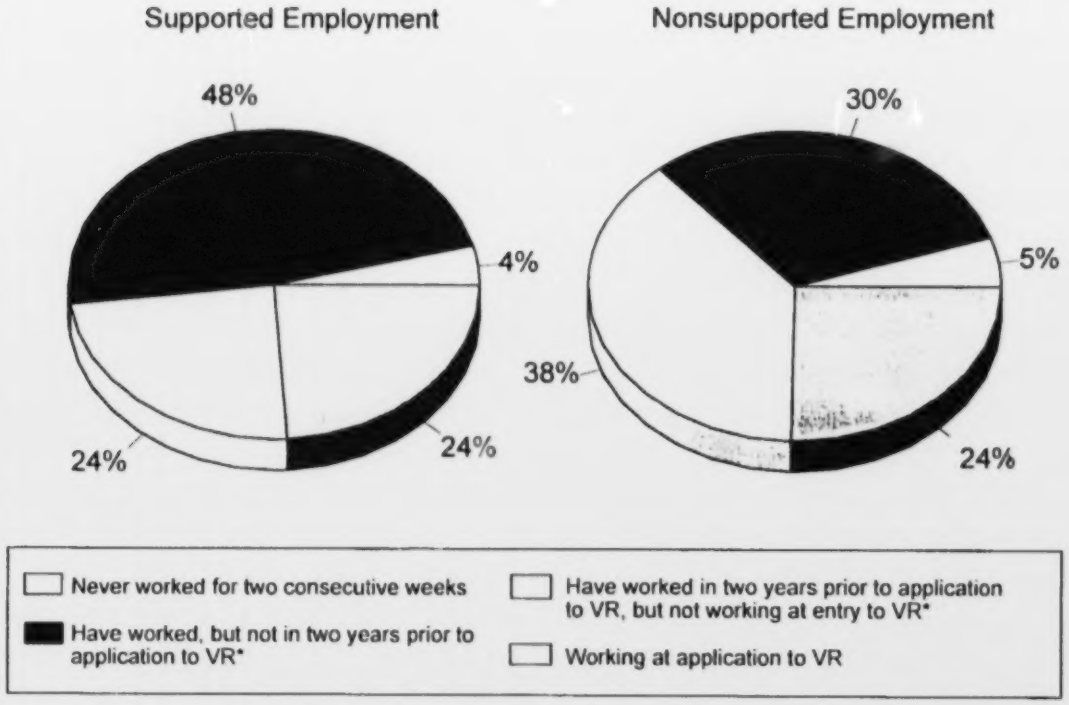
[4]On average, these individuals worked for 24 hours per week (median of 22.5) and earned $4.78 per hour (median $4.75).

Table 4: Overall Work History of SE and Other Consumers, by Disability Type

Work History	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers: SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Percentage of Other Consumers: Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Never worked for two consecutive weeks	6%	2%	4%	13%	5%	5%
Have worked, but not in two years prior to application to VR*	47%	50%	48%	34%	28%	30%
Have worked in two years prior to application to VR, but not working at entry to VR*	24%	23%	24%	32%	36%	38%
Working at application to VR	23%	25%	24%	21%	32%	24%

*Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Figure 3: Overall Work History of Supported Employment and Other Consumers



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Although most SE consumers entered VR with some amount of work experience, data from the work history interview indicate that such experience was quite limited. As shown, over half of all SE consumers (56 percent) held only one job in their lifetime prior to applying for VR services, compared to 42 percent of other consumers (**Table 5**). Other consumers were twice as likely as SE consumers to have held three jobs. SE consumers whose disability is mental retardation had an especially limited work history. Seventy percent of those consumers had held only one job, compared to 41 percent of other SE consumers. Overall, over three-fourths (76 percent) of SE consumers with mental retardation had no more than a single job prior to VR entry, compared to 43 percent of other SE consumers.

Table 5: Number of Jobs Held in Lifetime for SE and Other Consumers, by Disability Type

	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
Number of Jobs Held	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
None	6%	2%	4%	14%	5%	5%
One*†	70%	41%	56%	53%	41%	42%
Two†	16%	37%	26%	27%	32%	31%
Three*	3%	11%	7%	6%	15%	14%
Four	3%	8%	5%	1%	5%	5%
Five	1%	0%	1%	-	3%	2%

*Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
†Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Profile of Most Recent Employment

We asked consumers with a work history to provide information about their most recent job, regardless of when they held the job in relation to the time of entry into VR. As shown in **Table 6**, nearly one-third of these SE consumers worked in a supported employment position in their most recent employment, including 40 percent of consumers with a disability of mental retardation; an additional nine percent worked in a sheltered job.[5] SE consumers with mental retardation were significantly more likely than other SE consumers to have worked in an SE job before entry into VR services and significantly less likely to have worked in the competitive (unsupported) labor market. Persons with significant disabilities exiting VR services in employment other than SE were much more likely to have worked in the competitive labor market (86 percent compared to 54 percent) prior to application to VR, and much less likely to have worked in supported employment.

[5]Owing to the overlap between the competitive labor market and SE, it may be that a larger (or smaller) percentage of SE consumers actually worked in a noncompetitive or supported position than shown here.

Table 6: Type of Most Recent Employment for SE and Other Consumers, by Disability Type

Type of Job	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Competitive labor market*†	43%	64%	54%	67%	88%	86%
Sheltered work	12%	7%	9%	25%	2%	4%
Self-employment	0%	4%	2%	-	5%	5%
Supported employment*†	40%	24%	32%	4%	1%	1%
Other	6%	-	3%	4%	4%	4%

*Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
†Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Table 7 summarizes findings about SE and other consumers' most recent employment experience prior to receiving VR services. For SE consumers, service occupations accounted for more than half (55 percent) of these jobs, followed by clerical/sales (15 percent), and miscellaneous (22 percent). No other single category of occupations accounted for more than five percent of SE consumers' most recent employment experience. The distribution by occupation type is very similar for consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers. In comparison, significantly fewer other consumers had worked in service occupations (25 versus 55 percent), and significantly more had held a professional, managerial, or technical position (24 versus 2 percent), prior to entry into VR.

On average, SE consumers held their most recent job for 2.3 years (median of 1.4). The mean hourly wage in the most recent jobs held by SE consumers was $4.88 (median of $4.98), with nearly one-third (32 percent) earning minimum wage or less.[6] SE consumers with mental retardation earned an average of more than one dollar less per hour in their most recent employment than did SE consumers with other disabilities ($4.30 an hour compared to $5.42 an hour). Overall, SE consumers worked an average of 24.5 hours per week (median of 23) in their most recent employment. Although only 16 percent of SE consumers received health insurance through their most recent employment, 91 percent reported that they liked the job either "very much" (51 percent) or fairly well (40 percent).

[6]Minimum wage at the time most of these data were collected was $4.25 an hour.

Table 7: Profile of Most Recent Employment for SE and Other Consumers, by Disability Type

Characteristic of Most Recent employment	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Type of occupation						
Service*	55%	54%	55%	40%	24%	25%
Clerical/sales	17%	13%	15%	9%	19%	18%
Benchwork	5%	5%	5%	12%	4%	5%
Professional, managerial, technical*	-	4%	2%	5%	26%	24%
Miscellaneous	20%	22%	22%	24%	14%	15%
All other*	3%	2%	3%	24%	24%	24%
Average years held job						
Mean*	2.3	2.3	2.3	3.5	4.4	4.4
Median	1.1	1.8	1.4	2.2	2.4	2.4
Average earnings per hour						
Mean*†	$4.30	$5.42	$4.88	$4.24	$7.50	$7.26
Median	$4.58	$5.25	$4.98	$4.25	$6.00	$6.00
Average hours worked per week						
Mean*	22.3	26.5	24.5	27.5	35.8	35.1
Median	20	25	23	30	40	40
Percentage with health insurance through employment*	12%	19%	16%	23%	39%	38%
Satisfaction with Job						
Liked the job very much†	62%	39%	51%	51%	52%	52%
Liked the job fairly well†	28%	51%	40%	38%	34%	35%
Did not like the job much	7%	7%	7%	8%	8%	8%
Did not like the job at all	3%	3%	3%	3%	6%	6%

*Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
†Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

As shown, consumers exiting VR services in employment other than SE earned an average of $2.38 more per hour, worked an average of nearly 11 more hours per week, held the job nearly twice as long, and were more than twice as likely to have received health insurance through their most recent employment. In terms of average wages, most of the difference between these two groups of consumers was accounted for by individuals with disabilities other than mental retardation; hourly wages earned by persons with mental retardation varied less by SE status, ($4.30 for SE consumers and $4.24 for other consumers). Differences between persons with mental retardation and those with other disabilities, in terms of average hours worked per week were also evident but less dramatic. With respect to job tenure and availability

of health insurance, the greatest differences are found between those in SE at exit and those in other forms of employment. Individuals in SE held their most recent jobs about half as long and received benefits through their job about half as frequently as did other successful, significantly disabled consumers.

Other Characteristics at Entry into VR Services

Data we abstracted from consumer' case files included several other data elements that help us describe SE consumers at entry into VR services, including receipt of financial assistance, prior receipt of VR services, and sources of referral. **Table 8** summarizes the data for receipt of financial assistance.

Table 8: Receipt of Financial Assistance Among SE and Other Consumers, by Disability Type

	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Received financial assistance*	74%	70%	72%	60%	43%	45%
Most frequent types of financial assistance received by those receiving any assistance						
SSI – disabled*	64%	46%	55%	69%	23%	28%
SSDI*	30%	43%	36%	24%	23%	23%
Family and friends*	11%	12%	11%	17%	23%	22%
Other disability	1%	11%	6%	3%	4%	4%
General assistance*	7%	1%	4%	14%	11%	11%
Other public support	4%	1%	3%	3%	16%	14%
Private insurance	1%	4%	2%	4%	3%	3%
AFDC*	-	5%	2%	5%	9%	8%

*Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Overall, 72 percent of SE consumers were receiving financial assistance at entry into VR, a percentage that varied little by disability. In comparison, only 45 percent of other VR consumers with significant disabilities received financial assistance at entry into VR, including 60 percent of individuals with mental retardation and 43 percent of those with other disabilities. The more frequent receipt of financial assistance among SE consumers is consistent with, and probably a reflection of, the relatively higher percentage of SE consumers who have the most significant disabilities. SE consumers were significantly more likely than other consumers to have received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Disability (55 versus 28 percent), Social

Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) (36 versus 23 percent), and significantly less likely to have received assistance from family and friends (11 versus 22 percent), general assistance (4 versus 11 percent), and AFDC (2 versus 8 percent). Of those SE consumers who received assistance, 80 percent relied on such assistance as their primary source of support.

Case files included evidence of a prior VR experience for 30 percent of SE consumers. Over one-half of these prior experiences were successful (i.e., the consumer exited VR services in employment), including 90 percent of those SE consumers with mental retardation. In contrast, only 17 percent of other VR consumers with significant disabilities who exited into employment had a prior VR experience.

Based on information contained in consumers' case files, educational institutions were the most frequent single source of referral to VR for those individuals who exited VR in an SE position (**Table 9**). SE consumers were significantly more likely than were other significantly disabled consumers who exited VR services into employment to be referred to VR by an educational institution (23 versus 12 percent), or a local agency (32 versus 20 percent). SE consumers were significantly less likely to be self-referred (15 versus 26 percent), or to be referred by a family or friend (4 versus 10 percent). Overall, the most frequent sources of referral for other (nonSE) VR consumers were self (26 percent), physician or hospital (20 percent), and community agencies (20 percent). However, the most frequent sources of referral for individuals with mental retardation who exited into employment other than SE were the same as those for consumers who exited into SE (i.e., schools and local agencies).

Table 9: Sources of Referral to VR for SE and Other Consumers, by Disability Type

	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
Sources of Referral	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Educational institutions*	31%	15%	23%	40%	10%	12%
Self*	14%	15%	15%	12%	27%	26%
Hospital or physician	10%	15%	12%	7%	21%	20%
Rehabilitation facility - community-based rehabilitation program†	13%	3%	8%	7%	5%	5%
Family or friend*	3%	5%	4%	9%	10%	10%
Residential institution	3%	1%	2%	3%	1%	1%
Other agency*	24%	40%	32%	17%	20%	20%
Other source of referral	2%	6%	4%	5%	6%	6%

*Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
†Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999

Summary

The research question directly addressed by this chapter is "What are the characteristics of SE consumers and how do they differ from the characteristics of other VR consumers who obtain employment?" Based on the foregoing discussion we can say that, relative to other significantly disabled VR consumers who obtained employment, persons who obtained SE were about six times as likely to have mental retardation as their primary disability (50 percent compared to eight percent) and were an average of nine years younger. SE consumers were much more likely to have received special education while in school, and entered VR services with academic achievement levels at least three grade levels below other successful, significantly disabled consumers. SE consumers were significantly more likely to have received financial assistance at entry into VR, and to be referred to VR services by an educational institution.

SE consumers were significantly less likely to have worked in the two years prior to VR entry, and of those with a work history, SE consumers were more than twice as likely to have worked in the service sector than were other successful consumers. In their most recent employment experience SE consumers earned $2.38 less per hour, worked about 10 fewer hours per week, and received employment-related benefits about half as often as other successful VR consumers with significant disabilities.

Much of the difference between SE and other VR consumers may be explained by the relatively higher percentage of persons with mental retardation in SE. Persons with mental retardation who exited VR services into SE were more similar to other mentally retarded consumers of VR services than they were to SE consumers with other disabilities on several characteristics, including age, receipt of special education, academic achievement, referral sources, and prior earnings. At the same time, SE consumers were consistently more likely to be most significantly disabled, to have relied on financial assistance, and to have had a more limited work history than other significantly disabled consumers who obtained employment.

CHAPTER 3: THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION EXPERIENCE

In this chapter we describe the VR experiences of persons who exited VR services into SE. In this discussion we identify (1) the number and types of services consumers obtained; (2) the employment outcomes achieved, including wages, hours worked, and receipt of benefits; and (3) consumers' perspectives on their VR experience, including their levels of satisfaction with their VR counselor, VR services, and service providers. Once again, we compare the data for SE consumers with those for other successful VR consumers with significant disabilities and examine differences between consumers with mental retardation and consumers with all other significant disabilities. The data sources we rely on include case file abstraction and a satisfaction interview we administered at the point of consumers' exit from VR services.

Overview of Services Obtained by SE and Other Consumers

As shown in **Table 10**, consumers who achieved an SE outcome received an average of 8.3 services (median of six), compared with 10.4 (median of eight) for other significantly disabled consumers who obtained employment, although this difference was not statistically significant.[1] Consumers with a primary disability of mental retardation received significantly fewer services than did other VR consumers, regardless of their employment outcome. SE consumers with mental retardation averaged 7.2 and other consumers with mental retardation averaged 7.9 services. In comparison, consumers with other significant disabilities averaged 9.6 services and 10.7 services, respectively.

Virtually all SE consumers, and nearly all other significantly disabled consumers who achieved an employment outcome, received counseling and guidance, and, since we categorized supported employment as a training service, all SE consumers received this service as well (**Table 11**). SE consumers were less likely than other consumers to receive all other types of

[1]Our study collected data from consumers' case files on a total of 58 different services that we categorized into six broad areas: (1) counseling and guidance, which includes, for example, plan development and job placement, among others; (2) diagnostic and evaluation services, which includes 15 different types of evaluations or assessments; (3) education and training, which includes 15 services including SE; (4) physical and mental restoration services, such as physical therapy or assistive technology devices; (5) support services, such as transportation and housing assistance; and (6) other services, including family services and independent living services. Because of the way in which we classified services, our findings regarding average number of services received are not directly comparable to the data on services available through the RSA-911.

Table 10: Number of Services Obtained by SE and Other Consumers, by Disability Type

Number of Services	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
1-3†	23%	7%	15%	12%	9%	9%
4-6	35%	31%	33%	28%	28%	28%
7-9	23%	29%	26%	30%	23%	24%
10-12	7%	13%	10%	20%	14%	15%
13 or more	12%	20%	16%	10%	26%	24%
Mean†	7.2	9.6	8.3	7.9	10.7	10.4
Median	6.0	8.0	6.0	7.0	8.0	8.0

•Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
†Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Table 11: Types of Services Obtained by SE and Other Consumers, by Disability Type

Type of Services	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Counseling & Guidance	100%	100%	100%	98%	97%	97%
Diagnostic & Evaluation•†	57%	78%	67%	89%	84%	85%
Education & Training•	100%	100%	100%	52%	47%	48%
Restoration•	8%	28%	18%	15%	44%	42%
Support Services•	14%	19%	16%	29%	35%	35%
Other Services•	6%	12%	8%	7%	24%	21%

•Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
†Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

services, including diagnostic and evaluation services (67 percent compared to 85 percent), restoration (18 percent compared to 42 percent), and support services such as housing, transportation, or maintenance (16 percent compared to 35 percent) as shown in **Figure 4**. Among SE consumers, individuals with a primary disability of mental retardation were significantly less likely to receive diagnostic and evaluation services.

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Figure 4: Types of Services Obtained by Supported Employment and Other Consumers

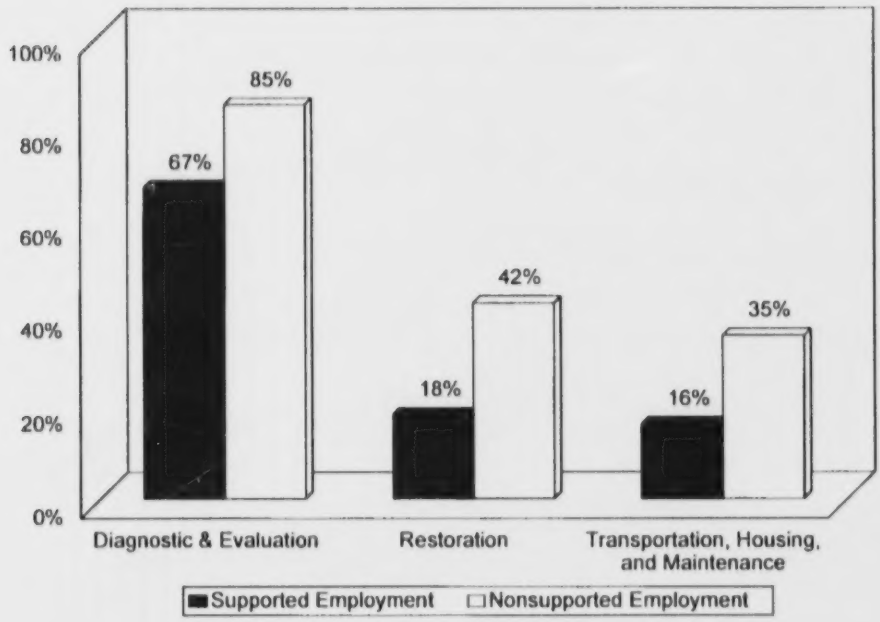

Table 12 summarizes the percentages of consumers who received specific selected services within these broad categories, by type of employment outcome and disability (i.e., mental retardation or other). As shown, overall, SE consumers were significantly less likely to receive vision assessments, postsecondary or business schooling, assistive technology services or devices, and transportation. Among SE consumers we found no statistically significant differences between consumers with mental retardation and other consumers with respect to specific services, with the exception of business or vocational schooling, a service more often received by SE consumers with disabilities other than mental retardation.

Information obtained from consumers' case files concerning receipt of supported employment services included the source of the service, the duration of the service, use of comparable benefits, and service costs. Since any one consumer may have more than a single SE experience while an active VR consumer, we analyzed the data with both the consumer as the unit of analysis and the individual service as the unit of analysis.

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Table 12: Percentage of SE and Other Consumers Who Obtained Specific Selected Services, by Disability Type

Type of Services	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Diagnostic & Evaluation*†	57%	78%	67%	89%	84%	85%
Medical evaluation	37%	54%	45%	56%	57%	57%
Hearing assessment	5%	13%	9%	5%	14%	13%
Vision assessment*	2%	3%	3%	5%	14%	13%
Education and training*	77%	87%	82%	52%	47%	48%
Four-year college*	-	-	-	1%	7%	7%
Two-year college*	-	-	-	2%	10%	10%
Business/vocational schools*†	-	5%	2%	2%	19%	17%
Restoration*	8%	28%	18%	15%	44%	42%
Medical services	6%	18%	12%	6%	15%	14%
Assistive devices*	1%	7%	4%	6%	27%	25%
Psychological treatment	1%	11%	6%	2%	7%	6%
Support Services*	14%	19%	16%	29%	45%	45%
Transportation*	13%	13%	13%	20%	29%	28%

*Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
†Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Data available from consumers' case files indicate that the VR agency almost always (96 percent) purchased SE services for consumers; we found evidence of the use of comparable benefits in only five percent of consumers' files. On average, a single SE service lasted a little over six months (median 3 months) and cost approximately $2,848 (median $1,300). As shown in **Table 13**, the average cost per service (placement) and the average duration of each SE experience were greater for consumers with mental retardation compared to other SE consumers, although these differences were not statistically significant.

Table 13: Costs and Duration of SE With Service as Unit of Analysis, by Disability Type

	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers
Costs to VR			
Mean	$3,088	$2,623	$2,848
Median	$1,300	$1,338	$1,300
Months in SE			
Mean	8.3 months	4.7 months	6.3 months
Median	3 months	3 months	3 months

Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Consumers who exited VR services into an SE position had an average of just under two (1.73) SE placements, a figure that varied little by type of disability (1.76 for individuals with mental retardation and 1.71 for other SE consumers). **Table 14** summarizes the total costs and duration of SE with the individual consumer as the unit of analysis. As shown, the average cost of SE services for a single consumer over the life of his or her VR experience was nearly $5,000: $5,556 for consumers with mental retardation and $4,731 for other SE consumers, although once again this difference was not statistically significant.[2] On average, consumers spent a little over nine months (median of five months) in SE services.

Table 14: Costs and Duration of SE With the Consumer as Unit of Analysis, by Disability Type

	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers
Costs to VR			
Mean	$5,556	$4,371	$4,921
Median	$4,126	$3,678	$3,814
Months in SE			
Mean	11.7	7.1	9.3
Median	5.1	6.1	5.1

Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Employment Outcomes

As explained in the introductory chapter, we selected approximately one-third of our sample of SE consumers while they were actively obtaining services. Of these consumers, approximately 85 percent had exited VR services by the time we ended data collection activities. Seventy-four percent of those individuals who exited VR services achieved an employment outcome, including 43 percent who obtained an SE position. As indicated in **Table 15** and **Figure 5**, another 34 percent obtained unsupported jobs in the competitive market, and 22 percent obtained sheltered employment.

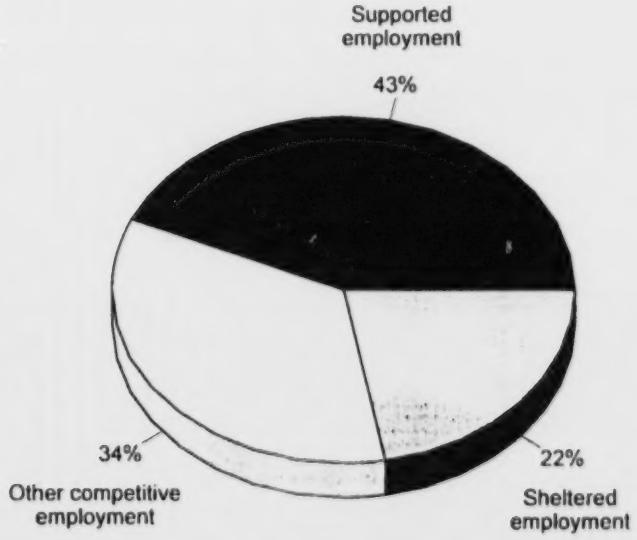
[2]VR agencies used Title VI-C funds to fund SE services, at least in part, for 45 percent of SE consumers, with an average VI-C expenditure of $4,246 (median of $3,538), according to documentation in VR case files.

Table 15: Outcome of SE Consumers Selected in Active Status Who Exited VR Services

Outcomes	Percentage of SE Consumers
Obtained employment	
Yes, obtained employment following VR services	74%
No, did not obtain employment following VR services	26%
Type of employment obtained by former SE consumers with an employment outcome	
Supported employment	43%
Other competitive employment	34%
Sheltered employment	22%

Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Figure 5: Type of Employment Obtained by Former Supported Employment Consumers with an Employment Outcome



Profile of Supported Employment Positions

The overwhelming majority of SE jobs consumers obtained were individual placements (86 percent); the remaining 14 percent of consumers worked in a group or enclave.[3] Nearly half of all consumers who exited VR services into SE positions worked in the service sector (49 percent) (**Table 16** and **Figure 6**). Clerical or sales positions accounted for another 23 percent of SE positions, followed by miscellaneous at 15 percent. As shown, other significantly

[3]This discussion of SE positions is based on all consumers who were employed in SE at exit from VR services, not only those selected as active consumers.

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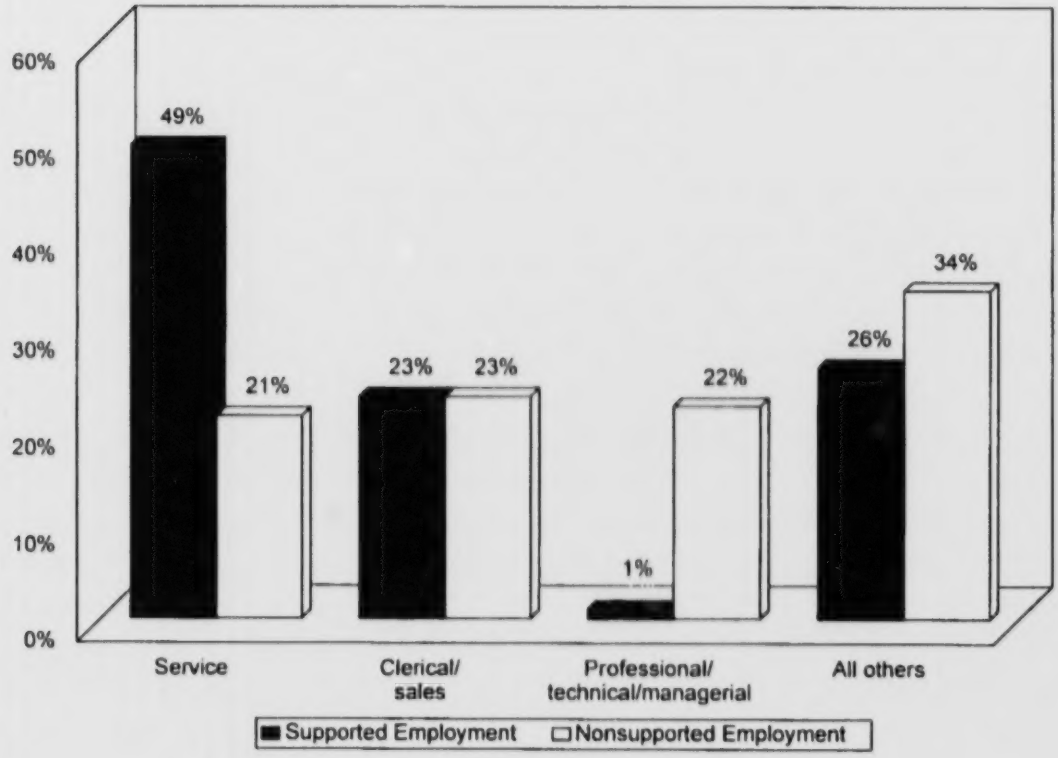
Table 16: Percentage of SE and Other VR Consumers by Type of Occupation at Exit by Disability Type

Type of Occupation at Exit from VR Services	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Service*	54%	45%	49%	35%	20%	21%
Clerical/sales	19%	27%	23%	17%	23%	23%
Benchwork	8%	3%	5%	26%	7%	8%
Ag/fish/forest	3%	3%	3%	3%	1%	1%
Processing	1%	3%	2%	4%	1%	1%
Machine trades*	1%	1%	1%	2%	4%	4%
Professional, managerial, technical*	-	3%	1%	2%	24%	22%
Structural work*	1%	-	-	3%	5%	5%
Miscellaneous	15%	16%	15%	8%	16%	15%

*Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999

Figure 6: Percentage of Supported Employment and Other VR Consumers by Type of Occupation at Exit from VR Services



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disabled former consumers were much more likely to obtain professional, managerial, or technical jobs; much less likely to have entered a service occupation; and equally likely to have worked in a clerical or sales position.[4] Among SE consumers we found no significant differences in the types of occupations obtained by individuals with mental retardation and individuals with other disabilities. Individuals with mental retardation who obtained employment other than SE were significantly more likely to work in the service sector and less likely to work in professional, managerial, or technical occupations.

Individuals who obtained an SE position worked far fewer hours per week and earned significantly less per hour than did other employed significantly disabled former consumers with earnings (**Table 17**). Persons who obtained an SE position worked an average of 23 hours per week, with average hourly earnings of $4.53 (median of $4.75). Consumers with a primary disability of mental retardation earned an average of $0.66 less per hour than did other SE consumers, a difference that was not statistically significant. In comparison, other significantly disabled consumers worked an average of 34 hours per week (median of 40) and earned an average of $7.20 per hour (median of $5.77). Earnings for consumers with mental retardation at exit from VR were virtually the same for both types of employment; SE consumers with mental retardation averaged $4.21 per hour, and consumers with mental retardation who obtained other forms of employment averaged $4.19 per hour.[5]

Table 17: Average Hourly Earning and Hours Worked per Week in the Job at Exit from VR Services for SE and Other Consumers, by Disability Type

	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Earnings at closure						
Mean*	$4.21	$4.87	$4.53	$4.19	$7.48	$7.20
Median	$4.75	$5.00	$4.75	$4.75	$6.28	$5.77
Hours worked per week at closure						
Mean*	23.0	24.0	23.0	29.7	34.3	34.0
Median	20.0	25.0	20.0	30.0	40.0	40.0

*Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

[4]Data on the types of occupations entered by other significantly disabled former consumers are only for those individuals with earnings; approximately 10 percent of these consumers exited VR services in homemaker status.

[5]Approximately 25 percent of consumers with mental retardation who obtained employment other than SE exited VR services into sheltered employment. With the data for these consumers removed from the analysis, the average hourly wage for the comparison group was $5.06 (median of $5.00).

Persons who obtained an SE position at exit from VR services were much less likely than consumers who exited VR services into other types of employment to receive employment-related fringe benefits (**Table 18**). Specifically, these consumers received medical or health insurance through their employment about one-third as often as other consumers, and vacation or sick leave about one-fifth as frequently as other employed former consumers. We found no significant differences between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers with respect to receipt of job-related benefits at exit from VR services.

Table 18: Percentage of SE and Other Consumers Who Received Employment Related Benefits, by Disability Type

Fringe benefits received	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Medical insurance*	12%	11%	11%	20%	34%	33%
Vacation/sick leave*	4%	5%	5%	14%	27%	26%
Other	4%	2%	3%	2%	5%	5%

*Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Despite the relatively lower earnings and the decreased likelihood of receiving employment-related benefits associated with SE jobs, three-fourths of all persons exiting VR services into SE reported that the job they obtained was the one they wanted (**Table 19**). We found no significant differences in job satisfaction among or between SE or other successful former consumers.

Table 19: Percentage of SE and Other Consumers Who Reported Obtaining the Job They Wanted, by Disability Type

Is the job obtained the one you wanted?	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Yes	85%	69%	75%	81%	70%	71%
No	15%	31%	25%	19%	30%	30%

Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Consumers' Perspectives on Their VR Experiences

The satisfaction interview we administered to participants examined their level of satisfaction with numerous aspects of the VR experience, including specifically their VR counselor; the amount of choice afforded them in the selection of vocational goals, services, and providers; and the quality and timeliness of VR services. Overall, we found a consistently high level of satisfaction across all these measures; at least 75 percent of consumers, whether in SE or other employment, reported being either "very satisfied" or "mostly satisfied" with virtually all aspects of their VR experience.

Consumers' satisfaction with their vocational rehabilitation counselor (VRC) was especially high, as indicated in **Table 20**. Between 71 and 84 percent of former consumers reported being satisfied with their VR counselors in terms of frequency of interaction, level of interest, willingness to listen, and overall performance. The percentages varied little by disability or SE status.

Table 20: SE and Other Consumers' Satisfaction With Their VR Counselor, by Disability Type

Measures of Satisfaction With VR Counselor (VRC)	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Met with VRC as often as you would have liked	78%	74%	76%	81%	82%	82%
Spoke with VRC as often as would have liked	82%	81%	81%	82%	84%	84%
VRC always showed enough interest	72%	70%	71%	76%	76%	76%
VRC always willing to listen	78%	81%	79%	80%	81%	80%
Overall, very or mostly satisfied with VRC	89%	77%	84%	84%	79%	79%

Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Consumer perspectives on the amount of choice they had in their VR experience varied somewhat by disability, although not significantly. **Table 21** indicates the percentage of consumers who reported involvement in decision-making in various aspects of their VR experience and the percentage who believed they had enough choice in decision making.[6]

[6]The interview asks respondents to identify who was involved in the selection of their vocational goal, services, and providers, and offers seven preprinted response choices: you decided, counselor decided, you and your counselor decided together, other VR staff decided, etc.) We calculated the percentages in the table for consumer involvement by adding the percentage who reported "you decided" to the percentage who reported "you and your counselor decided together."

Table 21: SE and Other Consumers' Involvement in Decision Making During the VR Process and Satisfaction With The Amount of Choice

	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Vocational Goal						
Consumer involved in selection	69%	78%	73%	71%	80%	79%
Had enough choice in selection of goal†	90%	75%	83%	88%	83%	84%
Vocational Rehabilitation Services						
Consumers involved in selection	64%	80%	71%	73%	89%	88%
Very or somewhat satisfied with choice†	93%	74%	84%	85%	81%	81%
Vocational rehabilitation service providers						
Consumer involved in selection	45%	43%	44%	61%	66%	65%
Very or somewhat satisfied with choice	84%	83%	84%	86%	83%	83%

†Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

As shown, persons with mental retardation, whether in SE or not, generally reported lower rates of involvement in decision making regarding their vocational goals, services, and providers, but higher levels of satisfaction with the amount of choice in all areas, although these differences were not statistically significant.

Consumers' satisfaction with VR services was also consistently high across a number of specific measures, as indicated in **Table 22**. Over three-fourths of all SE consumers reported that most or all of their service needs were met, that the quality of services was either excellent or good, and that the speed of service delivery was adequate. Other successful former consumers also reported high levels of satisfaction on these measures of VR services. SE consumers with mental retardation were significantly more likely than other SE consumers to report that all their services needs were met, that they received all the services they wanted, and that they were very or mostly satisfied with VR services.

In addition to their views on services, we asked former consumers to comment on their perceptions of the VR experience overall (**Table 23**). As indicated, over two-thirds of all SE consumers (69 percent) reported that VR either exceeded or met their expectations, while another one-fourth believed VR could have done more. While in the aggregate the percentages for SE

Table 22: SE and Other Consumers' Satisfaction with Various Aspects of VR Services, by Disability Type

Measures of Satisfaction with VR Services	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
All or most service needs were met†	85%	72%	78%	69%	72%	72%
Received all services wanted†	88%	66%	77%	80%	69%	70%
Service quality was either excellent or good	85%	72%	79%	82%	83%	83%
Very or mostly satisfied with speed of service arrangements	87%	75%	82%	86%	83%	84%
Overall, very or mostly satisfied with VR services†	91%	75%	83%	85%	85%	85%

†Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999

Table 23: Perceptions of Former SE and Other Consumers about the VR Experience Overall, by Disability Type

Consumers Perceptions About the VR Experience	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Consumers' reports of whether the VR experience met expectations						
VR exceeded expectations*	14%	11%	12%	20%	25%	25%
VR lived up to expectations	64%	52%	57%	49%	43%	44%
VR could have done more	23%	27%	25%	19%	28%	27%
No opinion	-	10%	6%	12%	4%	4%
Consumers' perceptions on the usefulness of services and experiences received through VR						
If I had to pay for it I would buy exactly the same services	69%	65%	67%	69%	63%	64%
I would buy better or different services	20%	21%	21%	24%	28%	27%
I would not spend the money on rehabilitations services at all	10%	13%	12%	7%	9%	9%

*Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999

and other consumers are very similar, persons in SE were about half as likely as other significantly disabled successful former consumers to report that VR "exceeded" their expectations.

Finally, asked a series of questions whose intent was to illuminate whether consumers believed VR was worth the investment, two-thirds (67 percent) of SE consumers said that if they had to pay for their own services they would buy exactly the same services they received from the VR program. Another 21 percent of SE consumers would buy "better or different" services, while 12 percent thought they would not purchase rehabilitation services at all but would spend the money on other needs.

Summary

SE consumers with a primary disability of mental retardation received fewer services than SE consumers with other significant disabilities. Overall, SE consumers were less likely than other significantly disabled consumers who exited VR services into employment other than SE to receive all types of services from VR, with the exception of education and training, which included supported employment. With the exception of transportation, differences between the types of services most frequently received by SE and other consumers is probably explained by the relatively higher percentage of consumers with mental retardation who exited VR services into SE.

The VR agency almost always purchased SE services for its consumers. Consumers who ultimately exited VR services into SE had an average of 1.7 SE placements, and spent an average of nine months in SE services prior to exit. Overall, the average cost of SE services for a single consumer was $4,921. We found no statistically significant differences between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers with respect to average cost of, or time spent receiving, SE services.

Nearly half (49 percent) of all the jobs obtained by SE consumers were in the service industry, while only 21 percent of other former consumers with significant disabilities obtained work in the service industry. Individuals who obtained an SE position worked an average of 23 hours per week and earned an average of $4.53 per hour, compared to other successful consumers with significant disabilities who worked an average of 34 hours per week and earned an average hourly wage of $7.20. On average, individuals with mental retardation in SE earned virtually the same wage as all other consumers with mental retardation who exited VR services in

employment with earnings. Persons with other types of disabilities who obtained SE earned 35 percent less per hour ($4.87) than did those who obtained other forms of employment ($7.48). Finally, persons obtaining SE were uniformly less likely to receive either medical insurance or vacation/sick leave through their job than were other employed consumers.

We found that at least 70 percent of consumers who exited VR services into employment were "very or mostly satisfied" with their VR experience, regardless of what aspect of that experience we measured (e.g., VR counselor performance, quality of services, amount of choice in decision making), or what subset of the consumer population we queried. Over two-thirds (69 percent) of SE consumers reported that their VR experience met or exceeded their expectations; another one-fourth (25 percent) believed VR could have done more, and six percent had no opinion.

CHAPTER 4: POST-VR EXPERIENCES

Of great interest to this study were the experiences of consumers after they obtained SE services, achieved job stability, and exited VR services. In this chapter we describe the post-VR experiences of former SE consumers, including the types of extended services former VR consumers obtained to help them maintain employment, consumers' employment status one year after exiting VR services, and consumers' satisfaction with extended services and with the employment itself. Where possible and useful, we compare key characteristics of consumers' employment, such as earnings, from the point of exit from VR services to one year later. Once again, we focus our analyses on (1) former consumers who obtained SE as a result of VR services, and (2) other significantly disabled consumers who obtained other forms of employment (with earnings) as a result of VR services. Data sources for this chapter include consumers' case files; interviews with consumers at, or soon after, the point of exiting VR services and again one year later; and a brief telephone interview with extended services providers administered as soon as possible after the consumer exited VR services.

Findings from the interviews with extended services providers are somewhat limited, owing to difficulties we encountered in completing these interviews. Among the problems we experienced were (1) consumers' refusal to allow us to contact their service providers, (2) providers' requiring us to obtain written consent from the consumers (who had given us verbal approval) prior to responding[1], and (3) difficulties in locating the appropriate respondent (i.e., the worker most familiar with the consumer in question) at the provider organization, owing to staff turnover. As a result, we present data from the provider interview only when the number of respondents to a particular item is adequate.

Extended Services

By regulation, VR agencies may provide ongoing support services to a consumer in SE for up to 18 months, although this time period may be extended if the VR counselor and consumer believe doing so would help the consumer achieve job stability. Stability, of course, means different things for different individuals, but is often measured by the achievement of specific objectives articulated in the individual rehabilitation plan, such as working a certain

[1]This consent was in addition to the written consent we obtained from consumers at the study's outset.

number of hours per week, mastery of needed job skills, or employer satisfaction with the consumer's performance. Our review of case files found that VR agencies extended the period of agency support beyond the 18-month period for 13 percent of their SE consumers.

VR counselors (or other agency staff) are also required to document in the SE consumer's case file the source of financial support for extended services, and we found that this information was available in 78 percent of the files we reviewed, as summarized in **Table 24**.[2] As shown, case file documentation identified local agencies or boards as the source of support for 26 percent of former consumers, and mental retardation service funds for another 19 percent (including 30 percent of the consumers with a primary disability of mental retardation). VR state funds were the next most frequent source of funding (15 percent) for extended services identified in case files, followed by mental health service funds (seven percent).[3] Case files for SE consumers with disabilities other than mental retardation were six times more likely than the files for consumers with mental retardation to identify VR state funds and mental health service funds as the source of support for extended services.

Table 24: Sources of Funding for Extended Services Identified in Consumers' Case Files

Source of Funding Identified in Case Files	Percentage of SE Consumers with Mental Retardation	Percentage of Other SE Consumers	Percentage of Total SE Consumers
County board or other local funding source	26%	30%	28%
Mental retardation service funds†	30%	8%	19%
VR state funds†	4%	26%	15%
Mental health service funds†	2%	12%	7%
Title 19 HCB waiver	8%	-	4%
Medicaid case management	2%	1%	1%
Social Security Administration - Plan to Achieve Self Support (PASS)	1%	1%	1%
Other funding source	2%	6%	4%
Can not determine	25%	18%	22%

†Indicates a significant difference ($p < .05$) between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Consumers' case files are also required to include a description of the extended services to be provided after the consumers exit VR services; we found this information in less than half (47 percent) of the files we reviewed. In 38 percent of the files we found some form of written

[2]Actual providers of extended services were identified in 95 percent of the files.

[3]A large majority (87 percent) of the extended service providers who responded to this question identified VR state funding as the source of payment for the services they provided to former consumers of VR services.

agreement between the VR agency and the extended service provider governing the terms of the transition of responsibility for service provision. The extended services most often identified in VR case files containing such information included employer follow up (83 percent), off-site monitoring (80 percent) counseling (63 percent) and on-site job coaching (58 percent).

We collected information on consumers' receipt of extended services from a consumer interview administered soon after exit from VR services and through a telephone interview with providers of those services we also administered soon after a consumer exited VR services. As indicated in **Table 25**, the percentage of consumers who were receiving job coaching services, as reported by consumers (70 percent) and providers (75 percent) did not markedly differ.[4] Little variation is also evident for counseling (67 and 61 percent), off-site monitoring (62 and 59 percent), and assistive technology services or devices (15 and 14 percent). Although the percentages across data sources for these key services are similar, the percentages reported for receipt of job skill training, transportation services, and job development do differ by 10 percent or more, with a higher percentage reported by providers for all three services. Possible explanations for this disparity across data sources are (1) the two interviews may have been completed one to two months apart, and (2) consumers and providers may not perceive services in the same way. For example, the much higher percentage reported by providers for job skill training and job development and placement services may reflect a view among providers that all of what they do might be characterized as job skill training and job development.

Table 25: Services Received from Extended Services Provider, at or Soon After Exiting VR Services, for Those Reporting any Services as Reported by SE Consumers and Extended Service Providers

	Percentage of SE Consumers	
Extended Services	Reported by Consumers	Reported by Service Providers
Job coaching	70%	75%
Counseling	67%	61%
Off-site monitoring	62%	59%
Job skill training	47%	83%
Transportation	43%	64%
Job development or placement	38%	98%
Independent living skills training	24%	34%
Assistive technology services or devices	15%	14%

Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

[4]We found not significant differences in the percentage of consumers with mental retardation who received extended services and the percentage for consumers with other disabilities.

One year after their exit from VR services we asked employed consumers if they continued to receive services needed to maintain their employment; some items asked specifically about receipt of services from an "extended services provider" and others asked about services more generally. Data obtained from these items indicate that between 65 and 79 percent of SE consumers who held the same job one year after exiting VR services continued to receive some type of support services. Over 90 percent of these consumers reported receipt of job coaching services.

We are unable to provide more precise information in this area, because one year after exiting VR services consumers were often unable to differentiate the source of the services they received. We are also not able to report an average duration of extended services because of former consumers who ceased receiving these services in the first year after exiting VR services over 40 percent were unable to provide a date. Finally, although a low number of responses constrains our ability to discuss in detail the reasons why some former consumers no longer received extended services, we are able to say a majority of these consumers indicated that they no longer needed such services.

Former VR consumers in SE reported being very satisfied with the services they received from extended service providers, as indicated in **Table 26**. Overall, 77 percent of SE consumers were "very pleased" with their services after the transition from the VR agency to an extended service provider, and another 24 percent were "somewhat pleased."

Table 26: SE Consumers' Satisfaction With Extended Services

Level of Satisfaction with Extended Services	Percentage of SE Consumers with Mental Retardation	Percentage of Other SE Consumers	Percentage of Total SE Consumers
Very pleased with services	82%	73%	77%
Somewhat pleased with services	18%	27%	23%
Not pleased with services	-	-	-

Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Retention of Employment and Earnings

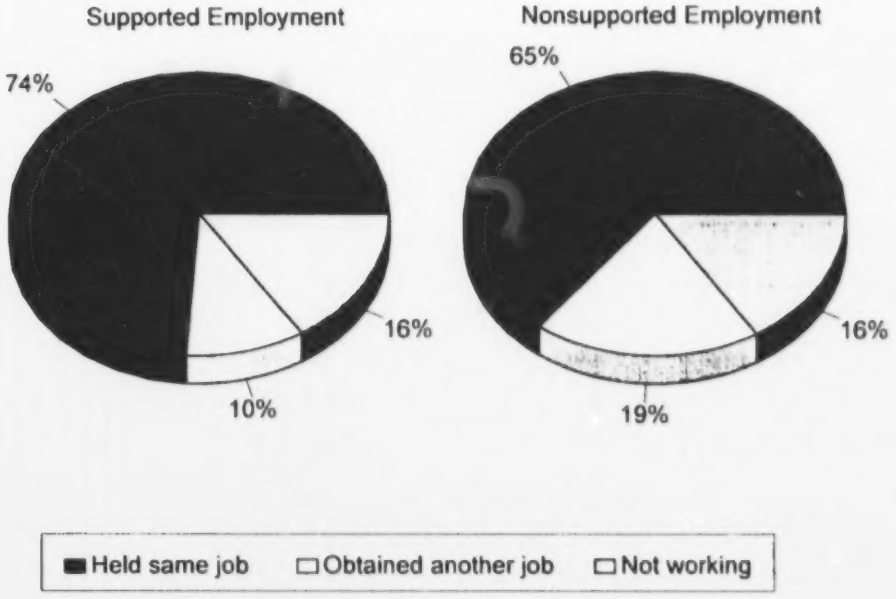
As **Table 27** and **Figure 7** show, one year after exiting VR services, 84 percent of former consumers who obtained supported employment were still employed; 74 percent in the job they

Table 27: Employment Status of Former SE and Other Consumers One Year After Exiting VR Services, by Disability Type

Work Status	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers: SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Percentage of Other Consumers: Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Held same job	72%	77%	74%	67%	64%	64%
Obtained another job*†	18%	4%	10%	13%	20%	19%
Not working	10%	19%	16%	20%	16%	16%

*Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
†Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Figure 7: Employment Status of Former Supported Employment and Other Consumers One Year After Exiting VR Services



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obtained through VR, and another 10 percent who changed jobs but continued to be employed.[5] SE consumers with mental retardation were more than four times as likely as other SE consumers to have obtained a different job during the first year after exiting VR services. The types of employment obtained by the 10 percent of former SE consumers who secured other employment during this time included (1) another supported employment job (44 percent), (2) other competitive employment (40 percent), and (3) sheltered employment (16 percent). Overall, the percentage of other significantly disabled former consumers who were employed one-year later (83 percent) is virtually the same as the percentage of former SE consumers who remained employed: 64 percent held the same job and another 19 percent secured another job.

The average hourly wage earned by former SE consumers who worked one year after exiting VR services was $4.68 (median of $5.20), $3.34 less than the average wage earned by former consumers with significant disabilities who obtained other forms of employment (**Table 28**). The modest difference in average hourly earnings between SE consumers with mental retardation ($0.62 less per hour) and other SE consumers was not statistically significant. However, while the average hourly wage earned by former consumers with mental retardation varied little by type of employment ($4.37 versus $4.22), the average difference in earnings between other former consumers was $3.37 per hour ($4.99 versus $8.36).

Table 28: Average Hourly Wage Earned by Former SE and Other Consumers One Year After Exiting VR Services, by Disability Type

Hourly Wages for Job at One-year Follow up	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Mean*	$4.37	$4.99	$4.68	$4.22	$8.36	$8.02
Median	$5.00	$5.25	$5.20	$4.33	$7.00	$6.75

*Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Over half of former SE consumers (53 percent) and other significantly disabled consumers (55 percent) received an increase in pay at some point between exiting VR services and the one-year follow-up interview. The average amount of increase for SE consumers who experienced an increase was $1.11, and the average increase received by other significantly

[5]We asked former SE consumers not working at the time of our follow-up interview to identify why they no longer worked; 40 percent responded that they had quit their job for a variety of reasons (e.g., they did not like the job, they could not do the work); another 19 percent were fired; 12 percent were laid off; 18 percent cited health problems that prevented them from working; and two percent said their job was a temporary position that had expired.

disabled former consumers who had an increase of some kind, was $2.20, which while almost double the increase for SE consumers, was not statistically significant (**Table 29**).[6] The increases received by SE consumers with mental retardation ($1.13) and other SE consumers ($1.09) were fairly comparable.

Table 29: Increase in Average Hourly Wage From Exit to First Year Follow Up for SE and Other Consumers with an Increase, by Disability Type

	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
Increase in Hourly Wages	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Mean	$1.13	$1.09	$1.11	$0.91	$2.30	$2.20
Median	$0.50	$0.75	$0.55	$0.39	$0.99	$0.96

Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Average hours worked per week by former consumers one year after exiting VR services in SE was a little over 22 hours (median of 23); 22.4 for consumers with mental retardation (median of 20) and 21.6 for other SE consumers (median of 25) (**Table 30**). On average, former consumers with significant disabilities who obtained other forms of employment worked about 35 hours per week (median of 40). We found virtually no change in average number of hours worked per week from exit to one year later for former SE consumers or other former consumers.

Table 30: Average Hours Worked Per Week by Former SE and Other Consumers One Year After Exiting VR Services, by Disability Type

	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
Hours Worked per Week at One-year Follow up	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Mean*	22.4	21.6	22.2	29.0	35.7	35.2
Median	20.0	25.0	23.0	30.0	40.0	40.0

*Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

[6]The average change in earnings for all former consumers exiting VR services in SE (i.e., including consumers who did not receive an increase) was +$0.34.

Overall, former SE consumers continued to be much less likely to receive job-related benefits than other former consumers, as shown in **Table 31**. One year after exiting VR services, consumers in employment other than SE were five times more likely than consumers in SE to receive health or medical insurance through their job, twice as likely to get sick leave, and one-third more likely to have vacation leave. Consumers with disabilities other than mental retardation were far more likely to receive benefits if they obtained employment other than SE; receipt of job-related benefits by consumers with mental retardation varied less by type of employment.

Table 31: Former SE and Other Consumers' Receipt of Benefits Through Job One Year After Exiting VR Services, by Disability Type

	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
Benefits	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Health insurance*†	11%	7%	9%	18%	46%	44%
Vacation leave	39%	25%	32%	35%	57%	55%
Sick leave*	32%	14%	23%	26%	48%	46%
Life insurance*†	5%	11%	7%	16%	37%	35%
Pension plan/ retirement*†	2%	9%	5%	10%	34%	32%
Dental insurance†	6%	9%	7%	13%	31%	30%

*Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
†Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Seventy-three percent of former SE consumers reported that they received financial assistance one year after exiting VR services, including 76 percent of former SE consumers with mental retardation (**Table 32**). In comparison, only 28 percent of former consumers with significant disabilities who obtained employment other than SE reported receiving financial assistance one year later. However, consistent with their relatively lower earnings, individuals with mental retardation who exited VR services into employment other than SE were nearly twice as likely as individuals with other disabilities to receive assistance (50 percent to 26 percent). Most of the assistance received by former consumers one year after exiting VR services was SSI disability or SSDI, as was also true at entry into VR services.

Table 32: Former SE and Other Consumers' Receipt of Financial Assistance One Year After Exiting VR Services, by Disability Type

	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Received financial assistance*	76%	68%	73%	50%	26%	28%
Most frequent types of financial assistance received by those receiving any assistance one year after exiting VR services						
SSI – disabled*	85%	66%	77%	78%	41%	47%
SSDI	17%	48%	32%	23%	33%	32%
Family and friends	4%	2%	4%	15%	7%	8%
Other disability	1%	13%	6%	1%	3%	3%
General assistance*	4%	1%	3%	14%	7%	8%
Other public support*	1%	-	1%	-	12%	10%
Private insurance	-	-	-	1%	1%	1%
AFDC*	-	1%	1%	3%	5%	5%

*Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
†Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

Two-thirds (67 percent) of former SE consumers who received some form of financial assistance one year after exiting VR services relied on these benefits as their primary means of support. These data suggest that earnings from SE have little impact on most workers' receipt of and reliance on financial assistance. However, 19 percent of SE consumers who received financial assistance at entry into VR (as documented in case files) no longer received assistance one year after exiting VR services in a SE job. Also, 14 percent of those who relied on financial assistance as their primary means of support at entry into VR services relied on their own earnings one year after exiting VR services into SE.[7]

Consumer Satisfaction

We asked former consumers to report their level of satisfaction with various dimensions of their employment (e.g., earnings, benefits, integration) as part of our follow-up interview, and

[7] At the same time, 58 percent of consumers who did not receive financial assistance at entry received assistance one year later, which explains why the overall percentage of consumers who received assistance changed little from entry to one year after exit. Determination of the percentage of SE consumers who eventually cease receiving public assistance would require data collection over a longer period of time than a single year.

we summarize their responses in **Table 33**. As shown, 95 percent of SE consumers were satisfied with their level of integration into the workplace, which we explained to respondents as "the sense of belonging and extent of involvement you have experienced at work."[8] An even higher percentage (97 percent) of SE consumers reported satisfaction with the amount of support they received from their employer to help them maintain employment, including 46 percent who reported being "very satisfied." The percentages of other former consumers with significant

Table 33: Former SE and Other Consumers' Satisfaction With Various Aspects of Employment One Year After Exiting VR Services, By Disability Type

	Percentage of Supported Employment Consumers			Percentage of Other Consumers		
	SE Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other SE Consumers	Total SE Consumers	Consumers With Mental Retardation	Other Consumers	Total Consumers
Satisfaction with integration in the workplace one year after exiting VR services						
Very satisfied	38%	34%	35%	31%	32%	32%
Satisfied	61%	56%	60%	61%	55%	56%
Not satisfied*	2%	10%	5%	7%	13%	12%
Satisfaction with employer support one year after exiting VR services						
Very satisfied*†	32%	63%	46%	30%	34%	34%
Satisfied†	67%	34%	52%	62%	52%	52%
Not satisfied*	1%	3%	3%	8%	15%	14%
Satisfaction with earnings one year after exiting VR services						
Very satisfied	6%	10%	8%	16%	13%	13%
Satisfied*†	82%	45%	67%	52%	54%	55%
Not satisfied†	12%	45%	25%	22%	33%	32%
Satisfaction with benefits one year after exiting VR services						
Very satisfied*	3%	4%	3%	4%	16%	15%
Satisfied	70%	37%	55%	51%	44%	44%
Not satisfied	27%	59%	42%	44%	40%	40%
Satisfaction with opportunity for advancement one year after exiting VR services						
Very satisfied*	3%	8%	5%	11%	16%	16%
Satisfied†	76%	44%	62%	59%	49%	50%
Not satisfied†	22%	47%	33%	30%	35%	34%

*Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between supported employment and all other employment outcomes.
†Indicates a significant difference ($p<.05$) between SE consumers with mental retardation and other SE consumers.
Source: Supported Employment Study, VR Longitudinal Study, November 1999.

[8]Integration, in the context of defining SE, refers to a workplace where persons with disabilities work alongside persons without disabilities.

disabilities exiting VR into employment who reported satisfaction with these aspects of their job were also high (88 percent for integration and 86 percent for employer support), but slightly lower overall than the levels reported by SE consumers.

Generally speaking, former consumers were less satisfied with their earnings, benefits, and opportunity for advancement, especially former SE consumers with disabilities other than mental retardation. Forty-five percent of these individuals were not satisfied with their earnings, 59 percent were not satisfied with their benefits, and 47 percent were not satisfied with their opportunity for advancement; more than double the percentage of former SE consumers with mental retardation who were not satisfied in each area.

Summary

The two main questions of interest answered by the findings discussed in this chapter are (1) what types of extended services do SE consumers receive after exiting VR services, and (2) what are the longer term employment outcomes for consumers who exit VR services in SE and how do they compare with other consumers? The extended services most often identified in consumer files included employer follow up, off-site monitoring, counseling, and job coaching. Consumers interviewed soon after exiting VR services identified job coaching (73 percent), counseling (70 percent), off-site monitoring (67 percent), and job skill training (53 percent) as the services they most frequently received. One year after exiting VR services, between 65 and 79 percent of SE consumers who held the same job they obtained through VR services continued to receive some type of support services. Consumer satisfaction with extended services was very high; three-fourths of all former SE consumers, including 83 percent of those with a primary disability of mental retardation, reported being "very pleased" with the services they were receiving.

The major finding in the area of employment and earnings retention is that one year after exiting VR services, 84 percent of SE consumers were still working; 74 percent in the same job obtained through VR services, and an additional 10 percent in another job. The average hourly wage SE consumers earned one year after exiting VR services was $4.68 (median of $5.20). Over half (53 percent) of former SE consumers received a raise in pay, and the average increase for those who received an increase was $1.11. Average hours worked per week by former consumers who exited VR services into SE was 22.2 (median of 23), an average that varied little by disability.

In terms of employment retention from exit to one year later, there is virtually no difference between former SE consumers (84 percent still working) and other employed former consumers with significant disabilities (83 percent). There are significant differences between the two groups with respect to average wage and average hours worked per week. Consumers exiting into employment other than SE earned $3.34 more per hour and worked 13 hours more per week. The average increase in wages for former consumers who exited VR services into employment other than SE was nearly twice the average increase received by former SE consumers, although this difference was not statistically significant. Earnings for individuals with mental retardation varied little by type of employment, while earnings for individuals with other significant disabilities varied greatly. Average hours worked were uniformly lower for SE consumers.

Former SE consumers were significantly less likely to receive health insurance and other job-related benefits than were other former consumers. Ninety-eight percent of former SE consumers reported satisfaction with the amount of employer support they received on the job; they were less satisfied with earnings (75 percent), opportunities for advancement (67 percent), and benefits (58 percent). Former SE consumers with disabilities other than mental retardation were particularly dissatisfied with their earnings (45 percent not satisfied), benefits (49 percent), and opportunity for advancement (47 percent).

Overall, the percentage of former SE consumers who received financial assistance changed little from entry into VR (72 percent) to one year after exiting VR services (73 percent). However, 19 percent of those consumers who received financial assistance at entry no longer received such assistance one year after exiting VR services.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study collected descriptive data on the VR experiences of individuals who achieved an SE outcome. In the preceding chapters we described the characteristics of SE consumers, the services they received, and the outcomes they achieved, both at exit from VR services and one year later. Where possible and appropriate, we compared these findings to analogous information for other consumers of VR services with significant disabilities who obtained other types of

employment. In this final chapter we summarize study findings that address each of the research questions.

What are the characteristics of consumers in SE?

Mental retardation was the primary disability for one-half of all SE consumers, and individuals with mental illness accounted for an additional 18 percent. Fifty-four percent had disabilities characterized as most significant, and another 42 percent had a significant disability. A majority of SE consumers were male (55 percent) and white (79 percent). The average age of SE consumers was 33.5 years, with nearly three-quarters under the age of 40. Eighty-seven percent of SE consumers had a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma as their highest educational credential, and over two-thirds (69 percent) received special education services. On average, SE consumers performed below the fifth-grade level in both reading and mathematics.

Educational institutions were the largest single source of referral (23 percent), followed by self-referrals (15 percent). Thirty percent of SE consumers had a previous experience as a consumer of VR services. Seventy-two percent of SE consumers received some form of financial assistance at entry to VR, with SSI and SSDI the most frequent sources of assistance.

Although most SE consumers (96 percent) entered VR with some prior work experience, on average that experience was quite limited; over one-half (56 percent) had held only one job. Of those SE consumers with a work history, 54 percent worked in the competitive labor market during their most recent job, and 32 percent worked in a previous SE position. Seventy percent of SE consumers' most recent jobs were in either the service industry (55 percent) or clerical/sales occupations (15 percent). On average, SE consumers earned $4.88 per hour (median of $4.98) and worked 24.5 hours per week (median of 23) in their most recent employment prior to applying for VR services; only 16 percent received employment-related health insurance.

How do the characteristics of SE consumers differ from the characteristics of other consumers of VR services?

At entry into VR services, SE consumers were, on average, nine years younger than other significantly disabled consumers who exited VR services into employment. SE consumers were almost three times more likely to have received special education, and performed four grade levels below other consumers in reading and three and one-half grade levels lower in math. Overall, SE consumers were more than twice as likely to be referred to VR services by an educational institution, and nearly twice as likely to have had a prior VR experience. SE consumers were 27 percent more likely to have received financial assistance at entry into VR. In their most recent employment experience, SE consumers earned $2.38 less per hour, worked

about 10 fewer hours per week, and received employment-related benefits about half as often as did other VR consumers with significant disabilities who exited VR services into employment other than SE.

Persons with mental retardation who exited VR services into SE were more similar to other mentally retarded consumers of VR services (who exited into other forms of employment) than they were to other successful SE consumers with respect to age, receipt of special education, academic achievement levels, referral sources, and prior earnings. At the same time, SE consumers overall tended to be more significantly disabled, to have relied on financial assistance, to have had a prior VR experience, and to have had a more limited work history than other significantly disabled consumers who obtained employment, regardless of disability.

To what extent do the number and type of services received by SE consumers differ from those of other rehabilitants with earnings?

Individuals who exited VR into SE received an average of 8.3 services (median of six), approximately two fewer than the 10.4 services (median of eight) averaged by other significantly disabled consumers, although the difference was not statistically significant. SE consumers were less likely to receive all types of services from VR, with the exception of education and training, which includes supported employment. SE consumers with a primary disability of mental retardation received an average of 7.2 services (median of six), compared to other SE consumers, who averaged 9.6 (median of eight).

VR agencies almost always purchased SE services for their consumers rather than providing these services through comparable benefits or directly from VR agency staff. Consumers who ultimately exited VR services into SE had an average of 1.7 placements, and spent an average of nine months in SE prior to exit from VR. The average cost of SE services for a single consumer was $4,921.

To what extent do the outcomes achieved by SE consumers differ from those of other rehabilitants with earnings?

Nearly half (49 percent) of all the jobs that SE consumers obtained were in the service industry, while 21 percent of other former consumers with significant disabilities worked in service occupations. Individuals who obtained an SE position worked an average of 23 hours per week and earned an average of $4.53 per hour; other successful consumers with significant disabilities worked an average of 34 hours per week and earned an average hourly wage of $7.20, or $2.67 more than SE consumers.

On average, individuals with mental retardation in SE earned virtually the same wage as consumers with mental retardation who exited into other types of employment. ($4.21 versus $4.19). Persons with other types of disabilities who obtained SE earned $2.61 less per hour

($4.87) than did those who obtained other forms of employment ($7.48). Persons obtaining SE were one-third as likely to receive medical insurance and one-fifth as likely to receive vacation/sick leave through their job than were other employed consumers.

How do consumers exiting VR services in SE perceive the quality and utility of the services they receive from the VR agency and how do these perceptions differ from those of other VR consumers?

At least 70 percent of consumers with significant disabilities exiting VR services into employment were "very or mostly satisfied" with their VR experience, regardless of what aspect of that experience we measured (e.g., VR counselor performance, quality of services, amount of choice in decision making). SE consumer perceptions on the quality and utility of services they received varied little from those of other consumers with significant disabilities. Individuals with mental retardation tended to report somewhat lower levels of involvement in the decision making process, but expressed relatively higher levels of satisfaction with the amount of choice they had, although neither of these differences were statistically significant. Overall, 69 percent of SE consumers reported that their VR experience met or exceeded their expectations, 25 percent believed VR could have done more, and six percent had no opinion.

What types of extended services do SE consumers receive and to what extent are they satisfied with the extended services they receive?

Consumers interviewed soon after exiting VR services identified job coaching (73 percent), counseling (70 percent), off-site monitoring (67 percent), and job skill training (53 percent) as the services they most frequently received. Consumers with a primary disability of mental retardation were 15 percent more likely to have received on-site job coaching, while SE consumers with other significant disabilities were 16 percent more likely to have received off-site monitoring, although these differences were not statistically significant. One year after exiting VR services, between 65 and 79 percent of SE consumers who held the same job they obtained through VR continued to receive some type of support services. Consumer satisfaction with extended services was very high; three-fourths of all former SE consumers, including 83 percent of those with a primary disability of mental retardation, reported being "very pleased" with the services they were receiving.

What are the post-VR experiences of former consumers in SE with respect to retention of employment and earnings, and how do they compare with other VR services consumers?

One year after exiting VR services, 84 percent of SE consumers were still working; 74 percent in the same job obtained through VR services, and an additional 10 percent in another job. The average hourly wage earned by former SE consumers one year after exiting VR services was $4.68 (median of $5.20). Over half (53 percent) of former SE consumers received a raise in pay. The average increase for all SE consumers who received a raise was $1.11, with

little variation by disability. Average hours worked per week by former consumers exiting VR services into SE was 22.2 (median of 23), an average that varied little by disability.

In terms of employment retention from exit to one year later, there is virtually no difference between former SE consumers (84 percent still working) and other employed former consumers with significant disabilities (83 percent). There were significant differences between the two groups with respect to average wage, and hours worked per week. Consumers exiting into employment other than SE earned $3.34 more per hour and worked 13 hours more per week. Earnings for individuals with mental retardation varied much less by type of employment than did the earnings for individuals with other significant disabilities. Average hours worked were uniformly lower for SE consumers.

Former SE consumers were much less likely to receive health insurance and other job-related benefits than were other former consumers. They were also much more likely to receive financial assistance one year after exiting VR services. While the overall percentage of former SE consumers who received financial assistance changed little from entry into VR to one year after exiting VR services, 19 percent ceased receiving benefits over this time.

Former SE consumers with mental retardation were generally satisfied with their employment one year after exiting VR services. Other former SE consumers were much less satisfied: 45 percent were not satisfied with their earnings, 59 percent were not satisfied with their benefits, and 47 percent were not satisfied with their opportunity for advancement. These percentages were at least twice as high as the percentage of former SE consumers with mental retardation who reported dissatisfaction with these aspects of their employment one year after exiting VR services.

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